



South Coast Air Quality Management District

21865 Copley Drive, Diamond Bar, CA 91765-4182
(909) 396-2000 • www.aqmd.gov

E-Mailed: November 21, 2012
blee@bellflower.org

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Mr. Brian K. Lee
City of Bellflower
16600 Civic Center Drive
Bellflower, CA 90706

Review of the Draft Negative Declaration (Draft ND) for the City of Bellflower Climate Action Plan Project

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) staff appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above-mentioned document. The following comments are intended to provide guidance to the lead agency and should be incorporated into the final environmental document as appropriate. AQMD staff appreciates that the lead agency is voluntarily developing a CAP to reduce GHG emissions.

In the Draft ND the lead agency chose a performance standard to establish a greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions significance threshold. The performance standard selected by the lead agency is based on the California Air Resources Board's (CARB's) AB 32 2008 Scoping Plan¹, which is the State's plan to achieve 1990 GHG emission levels by 2020. Specifically, the CARB Scoping Plan recommends a GHG reduction goal for local governments of 15% below 2005 baseline levels. Subsequently, CARB revised their targets based on the recent recession and newly adopted regulations in the 2011 Functional Equivalent Document (FED, Final Supplement to the AB 32 Scoping Plan).² The FED calls for a 16% GHG emissions reduction below 2020 "Business-As-Usual" (BAU) levels. The lead agency conducted a emissions inventory analysis and set the GHG emission reduction target at 17% below 2010 levels by 2020 and 19% by 2030, however, it is unclear how these targets are consistent with statewide initiatives (i.e., the above mentioned 15% below 2005 levels and 16% below 2020 BAU levels).

Further, AQMD staff requests that the lead agency further clarify how the policies for the proposed plan effectively reduce the city's growth impacts to be consistent with regional planning efforts including the Draft 2012 Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) and the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Lastly, the AQMD staff requests that the lead agency provide a technical analysis that demonstrates equivalence between the point values in the Climate Ready Development Standards (screening tables), the optional

¹ <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/document/scopingplandocument.htm>

² <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/fed.htm>

mitigation fee and GHG emissions reductions. Details regarding these comments are attached to this letter.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21092.5, please provide the SCAQMD with written responses to all comments contained herein prior to the adoption of the Final EIR. Further, staff is available to work with the lead agency to address these issues and any other questions that may arise. Please contact Dan Garcia, Air Quality Specialist CEQA Section, at (909) 396-3304, if you have any questions regarding the enclosed comments.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Ian V. MacMillan in black ink.

Ian MacMillan
Program Supervisor, CEQA Inter-Governmental Review
Planning, Rule Development & Area Sources

Attachment

IM:DG

LAC121030-03
Control Number

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Analysis

1. Based on a review of the Draft ND the lead agency has determined that the proposed project will achieve its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target of 17% below 2010 levels by 2020. However, the AQMD staff requests further clarification about how the project is consistent with statewide AB 32 goals. Specifically, to achieve 1990 GHG levels by 2020 the CARB Functional Equivalent Document proposed a 16% reduction below 2020 BAU emissions levels. The FED target already accounts for statewide measures such as the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, Renewable Portfolio Standard, etc. Because the proposed CAP appears to include these measures in its estimation of GHG emissions the AQMD staff requests that the lead agency clarify that a 17% GHG emissions reduction from 2010 levels is consistent with targets identified by the FED.

Further, the CAP allows new development projects to demonstrate compliance with the proposed GHG Reduction Plan by either 1) achieving 16 points from the Climate Ready Development Standards provided in the CAP and/or 2) paying a mitigation fee in lieu of points not garnered through these screening tables or 3) demonstrating compliance with the service area population thresholds in Figure 18 of the CAP. However, the lead agency did not provide a technical analysis demonstrating the reduction in GHG emissions that is achieved by a project which garners 16 points or a portion thereof from the screening tables combined with a mitigation fee (if required). Absent a technical analysis that demonstrates equivalence between the point values in the screening tables, the optional mitigation fee and the GHG emissions reductions required to meet statewide initiatives the effectiveness of the CAP measures provided remain unclear. Therefore, the lead agency should provide additional information that shows a nexus between the point system, the effectiveness of the measures in the screening tables and/or mitigation fees and the AB32 Goals. Absent this information it does not appear that the lead agency has provided substantial evidence needed for threshold adoption pursuant to Section 15064.7 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Additional Mitigation to Remedy any Excess GHG Emissions

2. In order to allow future projects to tier off this CEQA document, the lead agency established a new significance threshold in the GHG Reduction Plan that requires the lead agency to reduce individual project GHG emissions through a menu of potential mechanisms. This specific requirement is based on the presumption that unmitigated emissions in the City of Bellflower will grow to 362,446 MTCO₂e per year in 2020. However, AQMD staff is concerned that if the emissions growth rate exceeds anticipated 2020 levels then the proposed mitigation may not be sufficient to ensure less than significant impacts from the proposed plan or future projects tiering off of this EIR. As an example, if 2020 emissions levels are above 362,446 MTCO₂e per year then the proposed significance threshold (requiring a 16 point reduction in GHG emissions from BAU or compliance with the service area population threshold) may be inadequate. In order to address this possibility, the lead agency should provide an interim update to the GHG inventory prior to 2020 and require a revision of the proposed significance threshold or other alternative measures to remedy any excess emissions. Further the lead agency should commit to providing the public and other stakeholders an opportunity to provide input prior to certifying any changes to the

CAP. As AQMD is a responsible agency for projects requiring an air permit in the city within our jurisdiction this additional commitment will ensure that the proposed project is consistent with Tier 2 of AQMD's Interim CEQA GHG Significance Threshold for Stationary Sources.

Regional Plan Consistency

3. The lead agency does not discuss how the project's goals and policies will affect the city's growth compared to estimates in the 2012 RTP. If the project affects growth in a way that is not consistent with the RTP, the CAP may not be consistent with the AQMP. The final environmental document should therefore clarify how the CAP is consistent with the AQMP.